



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Arlington Planning Department, 730 Mass Ave,
Arlington MA, c/o Daniel Amstutz.

Date: July 13, 2022
To: Select Board
From: Transportation Advisory Committee
Subject: Endorsement of the Dallin School Safe Arrival/Dismissal "School Street" Program

Memorandum

The Transportation Advisory Committee has previously supported the Dallin School Safe Arrival/Dismissal "School Street" Pilot Program, and now has voted to extend that endorsement to make it a permanent and recurring program.

As part of their involvement, TAC has provided feedback on the proposed changes as well as committing resources to collecting data for the pilot program. The Dallin School held forums for community members to comment and share their feedback, and one of the concerns from residents was that there would be increased vehicle speeds and greater volume of vehicles diverted onto nearby streets. On two consecutive days in October of 2021 before the pilot program began and two consecutive days in May of 2022 during the pilot program, traffic speed and volume data was collected on Oakland Avenue, which runs parallel to Florence Avenue. Both times data was taken for 48 continuous hours over a typical Wednesday and Thursday, with the counts taken in the same location, between George Street and Renfrew Street. This data was averaged over the two days and then the two data sets were compared. Our analysis of the volume of vehicles using Oakland Avenue during the school street period showed that there was an average hourly increase of 67 vehicles during the morning arrival period (from 7:45 – 8:45 AM) and an average hourly increase of 24 vehicles during the afternoon dismissal period (from 2:00- 3:00 PM). Analysis of the speed data showed that there was not a significant increase in the number of speeding vehicles traveling above the 25 mph speed limit in those time periods, and the average 85 % speed stayed within the 24-27 mph range.

The data and averages will be presented in an attachment to this letter, but the most important conclusion is that the detouring vehicles did not significantly impact operations or reduce the capacity or safety of the street we studied, Oakland Avenue.

The greatest change in traffic volume occurred in the time periods immediately before school arrival at 8:10 AM and dismissal at 2:30 PM as the school is closing the street to unauthorized vehicles. Between 7:45 and 8:00 AM traffic volume increased by an average of 23 vehicles and between 8:00 to 8:15 AM the increase was 29 vehicles. In the afternoon there was an average increase of 16 vehicles on Oakland from 2:15-2:30 PM. In the time periods after arrival and dismissal the average number of additional vehicles was fewer (between 8 and 15).

From the data collected, there was an increase in the volume of vehicles diverted from Florence Avenue onto Oakland Avenue as the school street restrictions were put into place in advance of the arrival and dismissal process, which sharply tapered off following the arrival time and dismissal times even before the school personnel had time to roll back traffic barrels and traffic was allowed through. This is encouraging because the addition of roughly two vehicles per minute during school arrival does not significantly impact the level of service the street will provide to residents. There are several reasons why there was only a moderate change to the traffic volumes, including residents adjusting their travel patterns around the school, and more parents and students walking or biking to Dallin. In fact, the community survey that Dallin School conducted supports the idea that the School Street program had a positive impact on the mode of travel to school and more families are choosing to walk or bike to Dallin School.

Speed data was also collected on Oakland Avenue at the same time as the volume data and recorded vehicle speeds in 3 mph increments. There was a slight increase (5 vehicles) in the average number of vehicles going between 27 and 30 mph from 8:00-9:00 AM (less than 4% of the total vehicles). Also, there were very few vehicles traveling over 30 mph on any given sample day. Overall, the number of vehicles going over 27 mph increased from 0.6% to 4.8% in the morning arrival time, and from 2.8% to 3.9% in the afternoon dismissal time.

In conclusion, the School Street program has increased the safety of students arriving to school, and does not place an undue traffic burden on the neighboring streets.

We respectfully hope that this endorsement helps the Board in making its decision regarding this pilot program.

Submitted by:
Laura Swan, Chair.
Transportation Advisory Committee.